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ABSTRACT

Principals encourage student academic gain by the ways in which they govern the school, build strong collaborative relationships, and organize and allocate professional work time. Because these activities are important predictors of academic achievement, along with quality teacher activities, further information is also provided about how principals use leadership traits to increase school productivity. Principals' integration of management and leadership provides a conceptualization of the principal's role, that of educational leadership. Because instruction is the primary service of schools, principals should be aware of the special needs of each instructional area in order to provide the resources needed to carry out the school's mission effectively and to provide guidance and support to teachers. Effective principals involve teachers in critical decisions about instruction and protect the staff from external pressure and interference. They develop a sense of teamwork at the school in planning, implementing, and evaluating the instructional program, and involve parents, advisory groups, and school employees in the program. (Contains 15 references.) (MAH)

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The Principal's Role in Promoting Academic Gain

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The Principal's Role in Promoting Student Academic Gain

Article Abstract

Many investigations have been conducted on the connection between the quality of instructional methods teachers use and achievement levels of students. The purpose of this article is to examine the manner in which principals encourage student academic gain by examining how they: (a) govern the school, (b) build strong collaborative linkages, and (c) organize and allocate professional work time. Since these three activities are important predictors of academic achievement along with quality teacher activities, further information will be provided about how principals utilize leadership traits to assist in school productivity.

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN PROMOTING STUDENT ACADEMIC GAIN

Many investigations have been conducted on the connection between the quality of instructional methods teachers use, and achievement levels of students (Krug, 1993; Pickles-Thomas, 1992). There is a strong positive correlation between the two. In addition, findings point to the fact that the school principal's instructional leadership behavior is also critical to the academic achievement of students. It is safe to say that the impact of good leadership within the school is reflected in the achievement of students (Krug, 1993).

The purpose of this article is to examine the manner in which principals: (a) govern the school, (b) build strong collaborative linkages, and (c) organize and allocate work time to promote student academic gain. Since these three activities are important predictors of academic achievement, further information will be provided about how principals utilize leadership traits to assist in school productivity.

Importance of the Principal

Through research done since 1983, when America's schools were declared at-risk, it has been discovered that one of the most important characteristics distinguishing effective schools is the role played by principals. Research has shown

that effective school principals play an active role in the instructional process (Gullatt, 1994). The impact of strong principal leadership within the school is reflected in the achievement of students (Krug, 1993).

Governance Issues

According to Worner and Brown (1993), "Instructional leadership is undoubtedly the single most important responsibility assigned to the principal" (p. 38). However, the principal can not be solely responsible for the quality of instruction in school. This is a responsibility shared by personnel at the system level and building level along with the classroom teacher. There is currently a move underway to redistribute the responsibility of instruction and assign more of the responsibility, such as planning, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services, primarily to teachers. Many principals have found that department heads or subject coordinators can be of much help (Worner & Brown, 1993).

The principal plays a key part in promoting instructional improvement while governing the school. There are several factors that determine whether a principal is an effective instructional leader. He/She should: (a) possess a substantial knowledge base in curriculum, instruction, and evaluation; (b)

provide vision and direction for the school; (c) promote positive teaching and learning environments; (d) establish patterns of effective communication and motivation; and (e) maintain high expectations for self, staff, and students.

Effective instructional leaders are people oriented and interactional rather than secluded and isolated from the mainstream of daily school life. They function within a network of other principals through close contact with one another on a frequent basis, both formally and informally (Niece, 1993).

Instructional Leadership

In recent years school reform has included the notion of an enhanced instructional leadership role for school principals, but there has been a problem with defining the role of instructional leader. A disturbing theme has emerged from the instructional leadership theory:

> That a managerial role for the principal is antithetical to high quality instructional leadership. Thus, according to the instructional leadership argument, the generalist-managerial role of the principal must give way to one oriented toward curriculum and instruction, and building-

> level administration should return to its roots of principal-teacher. (Stronge, 1993, p.2)

Stronge also states that this separatist viewpoint is misdirected. He asserts that if instructional leadership is to be emphasized in the principalship, a clear definition, the range of traits, behaviors, and aptitudes must be developed. He notes that different studies describe instructional leadership in different ways and also points toward the need for congruence among the sets of behaviors that constitute instructional leadership. It is believed by some that instructional leadership is more worthy of the time and attention of the principal and that managerial responsibilities are unimportant. This is contrary to reality. Much of a principal's day must be delegated to operating a safe and effective school, and this involves maintenance. The principal is the person in the organization who sees and understands the total process of education and is responsible for everything that goes on. Stronge (1993) further states that:

> The proper role of principals is one in which the multifaceted duties and responsibilities are coordinated

> toward the accomplishment of productive school management. It is this integration of management and leadership that leads to an alternative and unifying conceptualization of the principal's role--that of educational leadership. (p. 5)

Stronge agrees with this unifying view of the principal's primary role as one of educational leadership. Principal behaviors contribute to a robust learning environment and the job focuses on intended outcomes.

Knowledge of Standards

A successful school is one that provides excellence, equity, and a challenging education for every child. Standards for what all children should know and be able to do ensure that the principal, teachers, and students in a school are all working toward the same ends. Having standards can be a guarantee of excellence and equity in education. Standards can improve the quality of education and students' academic performance. They define what every child should have the opportunity to learn. Poor students are guaranteed the same educational opportunity as the affluent student. When curricula based upon high standards for all students are

adopted, they provide coherence to a school's program by making expectations of all members of a school community clear and guiding the setting of a school's priorities. Standards are a sound basis for instructional leadership in a school (Ravitch, 1992).

Adopting high standards will not, alone, improve academic achievement. The standards must be woven into the whole fabric of the school or educational system. High standards should be the basis for the improvement of instruction, classroom materials, teacher education, and assessments. There are many things a principal can do to enable all students, even those at-risk, to achieve high standards. First, administrators must set clear goals or standards for their students' achievement. The principal must devise ways to evaluate whether the students are meeting high standards. Teachers should be closely involved in setting high standards and in rethinking the school's curriculum. The atmosphere created in the school should be one in which learning and achievement are valued and where students, parents, and teachers are viewed as partners in the educational enterprise (Ravitch, 1992).

Instructional Leadership Behaviors

Krug (1993) says that there are five essential categories that serve to describe a wide array of behaviors in which a principal engages: (a) defining a mission, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) supervising teaching, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) promoting an effective instructional climate. A sense of mission is necessary for all organizations, but is especially important for schools. Because schools are institutionalized, it is often assumed that their purpose is known and understood. However, without a stated mission, a school does not achieve what it should. An effective leader has and communicates an awareness of purpose and an active commitment to achieving their educational mission.

Instruction is the primary service of the schools. Therefore, the principal should be aware of the special needs of each instructional area in order to provide the resources that are needed to carry out the school's mission effectively. Although teachers most directly fulfill a school's instructional mission, they need guidance and support from the school leader. This makes it necessary for the school administrator to be aware of recent literature and research

showing advances in instruction and learning theory. The principal's duty, as instructional leader, includes being continually aware of progress being made by students in his/her school. One way to accomplish this task is to evaluate learning outcomes regularly and use the results to improve the instructional program. This improvement depends on defining realistic goals, assessing learning outcomes, and using assessment results to improve instruction and planning (Krug, 1993).

The school leader plays a primary role in developing the atmosphere of the school by: (a) defining reinforcement systems, (b) creating excitement, and (c) communicating a message to students that learning has value outside the classroom. "Leadership involves getting things done through people. Working through people involves communication, team building, and motivational skills, among other capacities" (Krug, 1993, p. 242). Important differences exist in the way effective and ineffective instructional leaders think about what they are doing and what strategies they use to apply their knowledge. Instructional leadership is more an approach to action rather than a specific set of practices. Krug (1993) found that there is a positive relationship between leadership

and student achievement. Student learning outcomes correlated most highly with the principal's skillful supervision of teachers and ability to define and communicate a school mission.

Student Advocacy Skills

Leadership can be shaped and developed. Research has confirmed that "an instructional leadership development program -- grounded in theory, sound assessment practices, and situated learning -- provides a solid model for the effective training of school leaders" (Krug, 1993, p. 244).

Students are at the center of creating educational outcomes and must, therefore, be at the center of our analysis of productivity in education. Students must do the learning. Whatever schools provide, whatever administrators or teachers do, in the end, it is the student who must use the resources to acquire skills and knowledge. Education is not something we do to people, but something that people do for themselves, assisted by the efforts of educators (Levin, 1994).

Education is a unique production because it requires learners to create knowledge and meaning in the context of their own lives. Humans are intentional beings and can altar their actions in accordance with their developing understanding of a

given situation. What happens in a class is dependent on who the students are, how they make sense of the world, and what they want or do not want (Levin, 1994).

Building Strong Collaborations

Since what students do and think is central to education, then it must also be central to the way schooling is organized. According to Levin (1994), motivation is critical to students' learning. Working to motivate students requires that their ideas and interests be taken seriously, that they be treated with respect, and that they have significant influence over what they study, how they study, and when they study. There needs to be less rigidity and hierarchy in the organization of schooling (Levin, 1994).

The current trend is for school reform that is aimed at a fundamental redesign and improvement of the system, itself, rather than at making the existing system operate more effectively. This calls for more emphasis on leadership for collaboration. School administrators have the leadership role in fostering collaboration both within the schools and between schools and other agencies. There is a need for more coordination of schools to foster academic achievement and to coordinate social and health services for students considered

to be at-risk. School administrators, social service professionals, and a variety of agencies must work together to better the life chances for these youngsters.

The school administrator can work with a variety of specialists and teachers to improve service delivery, reduce fragmentation of services, and better target resources. Within the school, leaders are seeking ways to better engage students and staff in the teaching and learning process and enhance their shared sense of community and common purpose (Lugg & Boyd, 1993).

External Linkages

Lugg and Boyd (1993) state that one of the major challenges facing today's administrator is deciding what type external linkages should be fostered and what role to play in collaborating with a variety of agencies and groups. Throughout our nation, various experiments are underway that focus on better delivery of services to students. Determining the desirable degree of integration of services between various agencies and the schools depends on context. Some schools and participating organizations may benefit from a cooperative working alliance and others may need a full-fledged collaborative one.

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Connections between individuals within the school walls can be developed and strengthened to improve the outcomes for all students and especially those at-risk. Administrators should be following a communitarian rather than a bureaucratic model to restructure the school. Strong interpersonal relationships between teachers and students should be developed. Many times our schools are too large, too bureaucratic, and too impersonal to offer opportunities for adults to connect with students. Charter schools represent a new mechanism for freeing public educators to set up educational programs with minimal bureaucratic restrictions. Site-based management is another concept utilized in a number of school districts to reduce bureaucratic control and replace it with opportunities to connect with faculty and the community.

For administrators, building and maintaining a collegial atmosphere is a job that is never finished. The foundations for in-school collegiality are built on trust and communication. Opportunities should be provided for one-to-one and group communications to receive and give help and to simply converse. By creative scheduling and the use of developmental teams,

school administrators can foster a collegial environment (Lugg & Boyd, 1993).

By building richer ties with schools, and between schools and other organizations, school administrators can better serve children and make better use of scarce resources. By moving from traditional, top-down approaches of leadership to more collaborative approaches to leadership, school administrators can play a vital role in meeting America's need for schools that are not only improved academically, but that foster success and resilience for all children (Sergiovanni, 1995).

Although our public schools are not about to collapse, "deep, longstanding academic problems cry out for attention and fundamental reform is warranted" (Gough, 1993, p. 195). Change is possible and well-worth the stress and uncertainty it entails. One example of such change is Washington Irving Elementary School in Chicago, IL. Students there were not achieving well and the teachers' enthusiasm was flagging. A new principal changed things. She thought that the reason students weren't learning was the way they were being taught. The principal filled teachers' mailboxes with research on how children learn best. She also required workshops, and supported risk takers. Hands-on science was encouraged, as was

the use of manipulatives in math class. Reading labs were set up where children chose the books they read. The efforts resulted in teachers that were rejuvenated and ready to innovate and students that were eager and engaged (Gough, 1993).

Maehr and Parker (1993) state that many of the nation's schools are at-risk and in need of true reform of structures and processes. A particular problem that needs to be addressed is that of improving the education of children who are poor and whose families are alienated from the schools. Many of these parents, themselves, were school failures and they send their children to school unprepared for learning. School is seen by these people as a foreign territory and reminds them of their inferior status instead of being a place to give them opportunities to work, learn, and develop the higher-order skills that serve to break the cycle of poverty.

Purposes and Goals

True school reform demands rethinking of the nature of education, change in the culture of the school, and a return to basics. Purposes, goals, and the meaning of schooling and learning must be reconsidered and the nature and impact of school culture must be of major concern to school leaders. Through the management of culture, those in leadership roles

can and do affect the lives and learning of students, which is their ultimate responsibility (Maehr & Parker, 1993).

Teaching and learning are guided by two different goals: (a) task goals and (b) ability goals. A task goal stresses the importance of learning for the sake of learning. Learning is interesting and attractive, and all who put forth effort can succeed since success is viewed as improvement and progress. An ability goal stresses learning as a means to a particular end. The end is to demonstrate that one is more able, competent, and intelligent than others. The goal is competitive with success being defined as doing better than others (Maehr & Parker, 1993).

Whether task goals or ability goals prevails has important consequences for behavior, motivation, and learning. A task focus will cause students to feel good about what they are doing and exhibit a continuing interest in learning even after formal instruction is completed. An ability focus causes students to have a less positive attitude toward learning, leading to memorization and rehearsal rather than critical or reflective thinking. The emphasis in our schools today on ability goals has negative effects on all children and especially at-risk students. These children are placed in a situation in which

they can only lose. True success is reserved for the elite few, and those handicapped by their backgrounds and lack of opportunity will be at risk of failure (Maehr & Parker, 1993).

Schooling in terms of task goals is possible in practice. The problem with our nation's schools is in the culture of the school, particularly in the definition of the purposes and goals of schooling. It is the responsibility of the principal to establish a sense of shared purpose within an organization. The first step is for the leader to examine their school's practice in the light of the two definitions of learning and decide what kind of emphasis makes sense in their case. Then it is necessary to regularly examine policies, practices, and procedures. Change will come when those in leadership roles continue to press for making actions accord with purpose. Maehr & Parker (1993) found in their study that changes in thinking and beliefs, as well as practices, made a significant difference in student achievement.

Proactive Promotion

The principal plays a key part in promoting instructional improvement. Contextual factors, such as district size, level of the school, socioeconomic and language backgrounds of students, and pressures from central office, community, and

staff, may constrain and partially shape the principal's instructional leadership. A study conducted by Heck and Marcoulides (1993) had a two-fold purpose. First, it was an effort to estimate the effect of instructional leadership on school achievement, and, second, to determine whether behaviors and effects are the same or different for secondary and elementary school principals. The findings support those of previous research done by the same researchers which suggest that the principal's instructional leadership behavior may be critical to the academic achievement of the school. The manner in which elementary and high school principals govern the school, build strong school collaboration, and organize to monitor the school's instructional program are important predictors of academic achievement. Also, it was also found that there is no significant difference between instructional leadership behaviors of elementary and secondary principals.

Allocation and Organization of Administrative Work Time

Principals differ in how they allocate their time as well as in the quality of their instructional leadership according to what they believe is important. In higher achieving schools, it was found that principals involve teachers in critical decisions about instruction and protect the staff from external

pressures and interference from community and central office. The same is not true in low achieving schools. Effective principals develop a sense of teamwork at the school in planning, implementing, and evaluating the instructional program. They involve parents, advisory groups, and school employees. Successful leaders communicate about achievement to the community and recognize the accomplishments of students. They orient the school program to sets of goals widely endorsed by community and pay considerable attention to developing these goals (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993).

Other duties of the principal as instructional leader include helping teachers acquire needed instructional resources and directly supervising how instructional strategies are transformed into learning activities. This activity in itself can be vary time consuming encouraging many principals to leave the activity for others to accomplish.

To identify important inservice needs, the principal can use test data in making changes in the instructional program, encourage classroom monitoring of student progress, and evaluate curricular programs. Central office personnel may also assist in this activity (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993).

The role of the principal as instructional leader varies from person to person since principals have varied leadership styles. Some administrators are a "principal teacher." They teach in the classroom for a portion of the day and see their leadership role simply as being responsible for daily school routines and clerical duties. The administrator as general manager serves as the official liaison between school and central office. This person gives and enforces orders to teachers and implement curriculum as mandated by state and local boards. The professional and scientific manager spends more time in classroom supervision than routine administrative duties, uses test data as a basis for planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction. Yet, another leadership style is that of administrator and instructional leader. This is the leader that realizes that his/her role encompasses both governance functions and instructional leadership functions, treats teachers as professionals, and gives them input into staff hiring, scheduling, evaluation, procurement of materials, and selection of objectives and methods. The curriculum leader views the curriculum in broad terms to mean what each person experiences in cooperatively creating learning settings. This type leader doesn't try to dichotomize

administrative and instructional functions, realizing that all tasks affect what is learned (Brubaker, Simon, & Tysinger, 1993).

All school administrators operate on their own personal theories. These theories help principals describe and evaluate situations, plan, and act. While all leadership styles and theories have merit, the general manager or instructional leader were the two roles desired, preferred, or in actual use. According to surveys done, most found principals that they did not know personally to be general managers. Those they did know, they viewed as leaders. The researchers attributed this to the "halo effect" (Brubaker, Simon, & Tysinger, 1993, p. 31).

Nonverbal communication affects the principal's status as an instructional leader. When discussing instructional matters, the principal should show excitement and enthusiasm. Classroom observations provide additional opportunities to convey excitement about instruction and learning. Instruction should be given top priority in morning announcements, school publications such as newspapers, and in faculty meetings.

The school's social context is also very important in determining and improving student achievement. Congratulatory remarks about academics from the principal serve as a motivator

for students and send a subtle message that the principal indeed cares about academics. The successful principal makes a point to say the right things and do the right things to encourage academics and the learning process. He/She pays close attention to body language and other subtle actions that are constantly read and interpreted by staff and students. Administrators should remember that "people watch your walk more than they listen to your talk" (Hutto & Criss, 1993, p. 11).

Summary and Conclusions

Many investigations have been conducted on the connection between the quality of instructional methods teachers use, and achievement levels of students. There is a strong positive correlation between the two. 1992). There is a strong positive correlation between the two. In addition, findings point to the fact that the school principal's instructional leadership behavior is also critical to the academic achievement of students. It is safe to say that the impact of good leadership within the school is reflected in the achievement of students The purpose of this article has been to examine the manner in which principals: (a) govern the school, (b) build strong collaborative linkages, and (c) organize and allocate work time to promote student academic gain.

The principal plays a key part in promoting instructional improvement. There are several factors that determine whether a principal is an effective instructional leader. He/She should: (a) possess a substantial knowledge base in curriculum, instruction, and evaluation; (b) provide vision and direction for the school; (c) promote positive teaching and learning environments; (d) establish patterns of effective communication and motivation; and (e) maintain high expectations for self, staff, and students.

The proper role of principals is one in which the multifaceted duties and responsibilities are coordinated toward the accomplishment of productive school management. It is this integration of management and leadership that leads to an alternative and unifying conceptualization of the principal's role--that of educational leadership. Thus, principal behaviors contribute to a robust learning environment and the job focuses on intended outcomes.

Instruction is the primary service of the schools. Therefore, the principal should be aware of the special needs of each instructional area in order to provide the resources that are needed to carry out the school's mission effectively no matter how time consuming the task becomes. Although teachers

most directly fulfill a school's instructional mission, they need guidance and support from the school leader. This makes it necessary for the school administrator to be aware of recent literature and research showing advances in instruction and learning theory. The principal's duty, as instructional leader, includes being continually aware of progress being made by students in his/her school.

For administrators, building and maintaining a collegial atmosphere is a job that is never finished. The foundations for in-school collegiality are built on trust and communication. Opportunities should be provided for one-to-one and group communications to receive and give help and to simply converse. By creative scheduling and the use of developmental teams, school administrators can foster a collegial environment.

In higher achieving schools, it was found that principals involved teachers in critical decisions about instruction and protected the staff from external pressures and interference from community and central office. The same was not true in low achieving schools. Effective principals developed a sense of teamwork at the school in planning, implementing, and evaluating the instructional program. They involved parents, advisory groups, and school employees. Successful leaders

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